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ABSTRACT

The Sexual Abuse Counselling Service is a unit within the Department of Families, Youth, and Community Care in Queensland, Australia, that operates a counseling program for adolescent sexual offenders. Clients are expected to participate in individual and group counseling sessions, and family counseling sessions where appropriate. The group counseling program is a year-long closed-group program, attended by 10 boys ranging from ages 12 to 17 years. The program includes a 3-month assessment and preparatory period, followed by 3 blocks of group sessions, each with its own theme, which run concurrently with school terms. Guidelines for behaviors are negotiated with the group in the form of a "working agreement," and are regularly enforced. Adventure therapy components are structured into the program prior to each block, midway during block one, and at the end of the program. Adventure therapy is a nonthreatening way to introduce themes and issues relating to sexual offending behavior and to increase self-esteem, problem-solving skills, communication skills, and personal insight and growth. Adventure therapy makes concrete many of the abstract constructs discussed in counseling, encourages hard work rewarded by success, allows for risk taking without offending behavior, and is fun. Processing, or debriefing, is used to assist clients to reflect on their experiences, and apply the meanings to other aspects of their lives. The four activities conducted during 1996 are described, and considerations for the introduction of adventure therapy into adolescent sexual offender programs are discussed. (TD)

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The Use of Adventure-Based Therapy in Work with Adolescents who have Sexually Offended

By Susan Rayment

Introduction

Paul, after experiencing a number of trust games, begins to feel safe enough with other group members to acknowledge to them who it was that he abused. Paul is an adolescent who has sexually offended.

David completes a high ropes activity and states that if he can do that, he can do anything, including facing up to his sexually abusive behaviours.

Tim demonstrates some of the changes he has made in balancing his own needs with the needs of others. He offers to carry other group member's backpacks during a bush walk, after noticing they looked tired.

Chris helps other group members negotiate a number of creek crossings, and begins to realise he can be a caring person.

Fred experiences the friendship of other group members, and begins to like himself again.

These are examples of typical responses and outcomes achieved with adolescent sexual offenders through adventure therapy programs. The opportunities for learning are endless, and the acceptance for learning this way by young people is very high. Whilst group members make progress in dealing with their abusive behaviours, memories and experiences to last a lifetime are also being made.

This paper describes a counselling program for adolescents who have sexually offended. The counselling program was developed and run by the Sexual Abuse Counselling Service (SACS). While female offending clients are seen at the Service, this paper focuses on the program offered to adolescent boys. The aims of counselling with these clients, the rationale for using adventure therapy as a part of the program, and

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details of the adventure therapy components (including the major themes that are processed) are described. Finally, some issues for consideration by other services planning to incorporate adventure therapy into their work with sexual offenders are discussed.

Sexual Abuse Counselling Service

SACS is a specialist unit within the Department of Families Youth and Community Care, Queensland, Australia. It provides services to adolescents and their families when sexual abuse has occurred. This includes adolescent victims of abuse subject to protective interventions by the Department, and adolescents who have sexually offended, and are subject to child protection or juvenile justice interventions. SACS was established in 1989. SACS has five professional counsellors on staff, and an administration officer. It is the only service of its kind within Queensland, and has statewide responsibilities for assisting in the development of responses to sexual abuse.

Adolescents who have sexually offended who attend SACS are expected to participate in individual and group counselling sessions, and family counselling sessions where appropriate. Adventure based programs represent a significant and integral part of the group therapy process at SACS. Staff at SACS are accredited to facilitate residential experiential based programs and are trained by staff of "The Outlook". 'The Outlook' is a resource facility of the Department of Families Youth and Community Care, located at Boonah, an hour by road from Brisbane. SACS also contracts accredited instructors to facilitate some activities both from 'The Outlook' and from a limited number of commercial adventure program operators.

Aims of Counselling

The aim of therapeutic intervention with adolescents who have sexually offended is to prevent further abusive behaviours. Interventions by SACS with adolescent offenders are based on the belief that: 1) sexually deviant behaviours are learnt 2) that more adaptive behaviours controlling impulsive tendencies towards immediate gratification may also be learned 3) and that successful interventions are based on utilising existing systems including welfare, legal and family systems.

The literature (e.g. Jenkins, 1990; Steen & Monnette, 1989; Salter, 1988; Knopp, 1985) and clinical experience identify important information and issues to guide work with sexual offenders. These include: 1) promoting and encouraging acceptance of responsibility for the behaviours; 2) developing an understanding of patterns of offending, including grooming behaviours, thinking errors, and the events that lead up to the offending behaviour; 3) identifying and reducing levels of denial and minimisation; 4) increasing awareness of victims issues; 5) and developing strategies for future safety, based on the relapse (offence) prevention model (Pithers, 1990).

Along with these specific themes, other factors also comprise important aspects of counselling, both in the provision of skills and in establishing a context for change. These include: 1) increased self esteem, worth, image, identity; 2) psychosocial skills development, including communication, relationship and problem solving skills; 3) exploration of sexuality issues; 4) exploration of issues of own victimisation; 5) family relationships.

Many young offenders feel uncomfortable about meeting others. They don't know what to do or how to get along with peers their own age. As a consequence they have difficulty making friends or being part of a group. A young person might experience such difficulties, because they don't feel good about themselves.

In the present day, young people experience a bombardment of sexual information from sources including television and video. Young people who lack confidence and relationship skills can experience confusion about sexuality issues as a result. This can occur when they lack direction about appropriate outlets for sexual expression and when they experience pressure from peers to be sexually experienced.

Given these factors, a balance needs to occur between addressing specific offending behaviours and other aspects of their lives. The development of an identity, which has some positive elements, is important for young people to believe they can have a future that does not include sexual offending. This is important since adolescence is a time for developing self and sexual identity, important prerequisites for adulthood. Hence counselling sexual offenders is a complex process. Key elements are summarised in Table 1.

Adolescent offenders group counselling program

Group counselling is a tool used to achieve a wide variety of therapeutic goals, through a range of learning experiences and opportunities. Those opportunities include: 1) reducing feelings of isolation; 2) developing positive peer age relationship skills; 3) exposure to challenging inappropriate behaviours and cognitions; 4) increasing information and experience base from which to learn; 5) providing an arena for trying out new roles.

The group counselling program at SACS is a year long closed group program. It includes a three-month intake, assessment and preparatory period, followed by three blocks of group sessions, which run concurrently with the school terms. Each block of 10 weekly group sessions (each of two and a half-hours) has a different theme. These include:

- Block one - Facing up to and accepting responsibility for sexual offending. [Jenkins (1990) refers to the process of offence disclosure as "facing up", to imply issues of personal responsibility. SACS has adopted this language.]
- Block two - Victim awareness
- Block three - Offence prevention and planning for future safety.

Adventure based therapy components are structured into the program prior to each block, mid-way during block one, and at the end of the program.

The program begins with approximately 10 boys of ages ranging from 12 to 17 years. All have committed sexual offences against children. Generally some have been charged and are either subject to court orders, including attendance at counselling, or are awaiting court appearances or sentencing. Others may not have been charged. Some have offended against siblings while others have offended outside of their families.

Two counselling staff facilitate the group, including one consistent person throughout the entire program, and a second facilitator changing each block. This model allows clients to be followed-up by the same person throughout the yearlong program, while still benefiting from the different input of changing facilitators. Composition of the facilitation

Table 1
Key elements of Counselling with Adolescent Sexual Offenders

AIM	PROCESS EXAMPLES	DESIRED OUTCOMES
Develop a context for change (prepare the young person for the counselling process)	provide information about counselling explore ways that counselling can 'help' balance negative and positive feedback highlight changes/progress set goals for change support	increase self esteem develop self identity involving ability not to reoffend help them to be able to hear, accept and act on feedback given help them identify, acknowledge and act on their need for change facilitate the development of internal motivation to be different
Explore themes directly relating to their offending behaviour	A. face up to (disclose) details of the offences	acknowledge and accept responsibility develop an understanding of offending patterns, including cognitive distortions reduce levels of denial and minimisation
	B. provide information on impacts on victims and families	increased awareness of victims issues increased awareness of self and others learn to balance own needs with needs of others develop empathy for victims
	C. provide information on the relapse (offence) prevention model and explore issues relating to future safety	acknowledge risk of reoffending understand the relapse prevention model develop an understanding of the importance of planning to future safety develop strategies for future safety
Address other aspects important to the young persons positive development and ability to prevent reoffending	provide specific information about communication skills etc provide opportunities and feedback re psychosocial skills development explore any other personal issues engage parents/family in counselling explore sexuality issues	improved psychosocial skills including communication and relationships skills exploration of issues relating to own experiences of victimisation (where appropriate) improved family relationships

teams usually includes male-female groups. This design aims to provide a combination of appropriate role modelling and challenge to gender stereotypes. Guidelines for behaviours are negotiated up-front with the group in the form of a 'working agreement'. Group members are encouraged to use their own words to describe the 'rules'. They are asked to consider what they mean for both the group and for each individual member. Key aspects of the agreement, which are reinforced regularly during the program, are: 1) participation; 2) respect; 3) safety and legality; and 4) feedback. These principles were

developed by 'The Outlook' (1995) for use in creating a safe environment for groups. SACS has adopted the use of these principles.

Adventure Therapy Rationale

Adventure therapy is an integral part of the overall counselling program for adolescent sexual offenders at SACS. Each adventure therapy component is designed around themes being addressed in weekly group sessions, along with other aspects critical to counselling with this client group. Young people are helped to connect their experiences with their efforts to deal with their sexually abusive behaviours. The adventure therapy components are also designed to meet and challenge the interests and behaviours of the group members.

Adventure therapy components are utilised in the SACS program to introduce counselling themes, to consolidate counselling themes, and to make concrete the abstract constructs discussed in counselling. Adventure therapy is also used to increase self-awareness and self-esteem of the clients. Facilitating the development of psychosocial skills including communication, problem solving skills, intimacy and dealing with conflict is another aspect of adventure therapy. Adventure therapy also provides a non-threatening way to raise/address some of the difficult issues of sexual perpetrators. Finally the program encourages hard work and rewards it with success; it can also encourage individuals to participate in the program through having fun.

There are a number of other positive outcomes, which arise from the use of adventure therapy. Participants have the opportunity to practise new skills, to develop new interests, and are able to gain real experiences to draw upon. Our clients and staff have the opportunity to assess levels of functioning, progress, and changes made by group members.

Adventure based activities are a newsworthy and non-threatening way to introduce themes and raise issues directly relating to sexual offending behaviour. They are also applicable to levels of self-esteem, problem solving skills, communication skills and personal insight and growth. This medium makes concrete many of the abstract constructs discussed in counselling, and provides lasting experiences to draw on when confronted by subsequent challenges. The use of adventure can also match the client's experience of sexual offending as risk taking. It allows the processing of self in similar risk taking experiences in the absence of offending behaviour.

Consideration is given to the choice of activities undertaken, when designing adventure therapy programs. The program is dynamic and takes account of individual interests, skills and levels of challenge. In making such choices, consideration is also given to staff accreditation, previous group experiences of activities, knowledge of the current group members, the groups' stage of development and the adventure model. The Adventure Model (Mortlock, 1984, cited in The Outlook, 1995) provides a framework for describing and understanding peoples different experiences to outdoor or adventure situations. This model describes four levels of experience, play, adventure, frontier adventure and misadventure. Frontier adventure can be a very memorable and high learning experience. However misadventure can be both emotionally and physically dangerous. Hence it is important to consider individuals experiences in planning programs.

Each young person's experience during activities must be assessed and facilitators should act to prevent a misadventure experience. For example, one group member was unable to complete the low ropes activity, and somewhat unwilling to have a go. This person was responded to with a combination of challenge and support. He was encouraged to try the activity and was given information about safety and instructions that he could get down when he wanted to. The low ropes course used commences with a log on the ground and gradually gets higher. This young person managed to get through about one third of the course with support and encouragement. When he did choose to get down, he felt very proud of himself. The following day when the group was due to attempt the high ropes, the beneficial outcomes of this were observed. Given the safety and satisfaction of his earlier experience, this young person readily participated. Despite again making a choice to come down before completing the course, he pushed himself a lot further and a lot higher than he or anyone else had expected.

Many mediums, including low and high ropes courses, high adventure activities, rock climbing, abseiling, canoeing, bushwalking, problem solvers and bush camping are included. Such diverse mediums ensure each group member is able to experience both challenge and risk taking during some activities, as well as a sense of esteem and achievement in being able to undertake other activities easily.

Attainable stages are an integral aspect of the program design. For example, climbing walls are a good introduction to a higher cliff-face climb. Such stages assist in creating motivation and challenge for participants. In undertaking such a process overnight changes are not sought. Instead, the aim is to encourage and produce change one step at a time.

However, the most important aspects considered in designing such programs are the objectives of each activity and the processing that will occur. Each activity is chosen with particular themes in mind, which are drawn out in both the framing up of the activities and the debriefing process. The model used to inform this is an experiential learning model used by 'The Outlook' (see Figure 1). This model was developed on action research concepts by 'The Outlook' in 1994, and reflects an experiential learning process of doing, observing, analysing, generalising and applying (using what has been learnt in a new situation)('The Outlook', 1995). This process can be continued by practising the learnings identified and eventually being able to use them outside of the adventure experience, in the young person's own world.

The process of experiential learning is achieved each time a young person is able to transfer learnings from one situation to another. Examples demonstrating this include a group members' description "I know talking about our different choices and ideas helped in solving that initiative problem, so I thought it might also help my mum and I sort out an argument we have been having about how often I'm allowed to go out". Another group member stated after a bushwalk "I know yesterday we weren't very good at looking after each other, but today we tried a lot harder and I felt looked after and think I was more helpful to others."

Processing is the method used to assist group members to reflect on their experience, consider what it meant for them and make links to any potential meanings for other aspects of their lives including sexual offending. Processing helps to make the activities or experiences therapeutically beneficial.

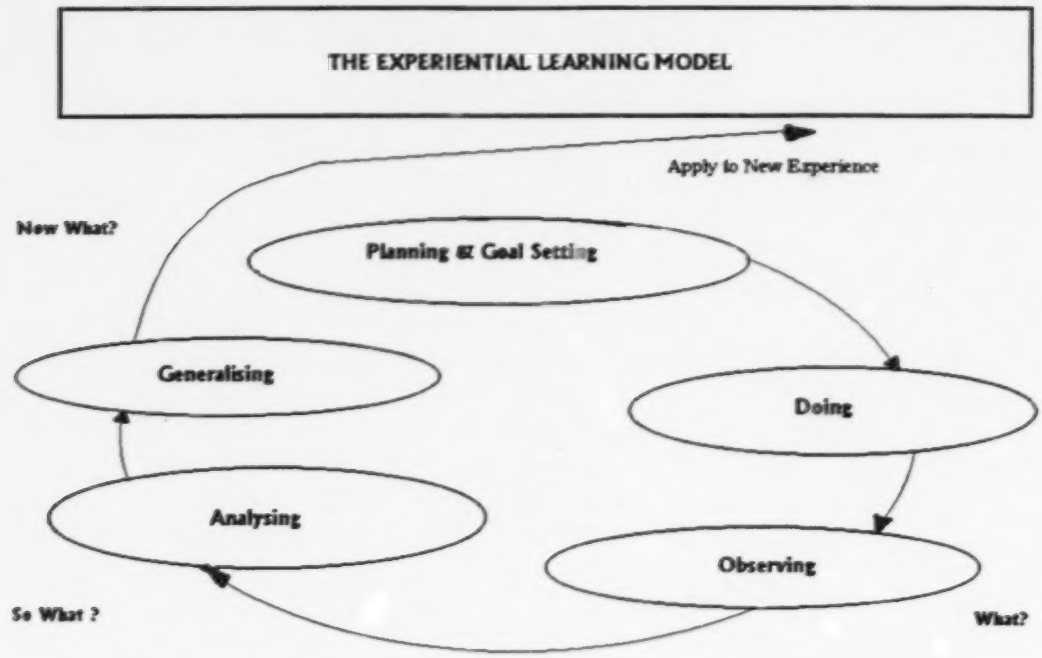

Figure 1. The Experiential Learning Model used by the Outlook Program.

Processing of experiences can be done formally following the completion of an activity. Such a 'debriefing' process might involve the use of 'what', 'so what' and 'now what' questioning. For example: "What did you do?" "What did you like best/least?" "So what was it like when ...?" "So what did you learn here?" "Now how does this relate to ...?" "Now how could you respond to a similar situation....?" (Schoel, Prouty & Radcliffe, 1988; The Outlook, 1995). Using a sequence like this, a rock climbing activity could be processed in terms of facing challenges or trying to achieve a goal, one small step at a time, which in turn could be linked to goals for counselling. Alternatively the same activity could be processed in terms of issues of trust in the equipment and in the belayer, with such issues linked to issues of trust in relation to sexual abuse.

The experience of the victim of abuse of broken trust could also be processed from this activity in terms of what it might have been like if the belayer had dropped them. This procedure is vital to how much learning a young person will gain from an experience, and how well they will be able to make abstract links to other facets of life. A formal debriefing process following "the what", "so what", "now what" sequence, follows the experiential learning model (see diagram 1). This questioning process broadly follows that advocated by Quinsland & Van Ginkel (1984) which matches cognitive thought processes. Hammel (1986) also emphasises the need for processing to be flexible and matched to the level of functioning of the group members and to their involvement in the activity.

Informal processing occurs spontaneously throughout each day, as appropriate, or as issues arise. In relation to adolescent sexual offenders, this includes highlighting examples of behaviour illustrating responsibility or awareness of others, the achievements

individuals make, changes in behaviour, links to goals or issues in their counselling and individual concerns.

It is also important to assess when it is important not to process an experience for young people. Experiences can sometimes be most powerful when people are allowed to "sit with it," and make their own connections. Reflections can also be made on later occasions. At SACS a variety of processing methods and tools are utilised which can include: 1)formal debrief; 2)informal processing; 3)no processing; 4)group discussions; 5)journals; 6)art work; 7)reflections (question) sheets; 8)photographs; 9)letters; 10)video; 11)graphs; and 12)group counselling sessions, and 13)individual counselling sessions.

The 1996 Adventure Therapy Program

The key elements of the adventure therapy program during 1996 are presented and discussed here. The themes of treatment and their relationship to adventure therapy are illustrated through this case example.

Residential program one (April 1996).

Key aims of this four day program based at The Outlook were:

- Group forming, getting to know each other.
- Learning/negotiating how to work together
- Introducing themes including facing challenges, disclosure and responsibility.

Initially, and over a three day period a number of 'getting to know you' and trust activities were used to assist group members to get to know each other and to increase the level of comfort they felt with each other. Problem solving activities and low and high ropes were also undertaken. These activities also assisted with group forming and bonding. The problem solvers, for example, "The Meuse", "Mohawk Walk" and the "Punctured Drum", provided a tangible experience of working together including negotiating different roles, how to assist each other and dealing with conflict. (For a more detailed description of these and other initiative problems refer to Rohnke, 1984 and 1989). The ropes courses provided an avenue for group members to challenge themselves physically. From this experience connections were made with the challenges they would face during the following year of counselling.

During this program group members were asked to begin disclosing small details of information about their offending behaviour. This outlined the reason for attendance in the group and at the adventure program. This also set the parameters for future group counselling sessions and future adventure therapy programs.

A bush camp-out was held on the last night of the program. This provided new challenges for working together and a very new experience for some group members. The intimacy and atmosphere of sitting around a campfire was used for group members to begin to share other personal information with each other.

Mid-block activity: Block one (May 1996).

This was a four-hour evening program run during the middle of block one. Aims were to reward the hard work already undertaken, and to reinforce the themes of responsibility and facing challenges. The activity involved rock climbing at the Kangaroo Point Cliffs, an inner city, outdoor location on the Brisbane River, well lit for night climbing.

The theme of facing challenges was explored through the challenge of climbing the cliff face. This included experiences of fear, wanting to give up, being unsure how to go on, and the huge sense of achievement gained by facing the challenge and conquering the climb. Ways that the group members were able to assist each other in facing such challenges (including shouting encouragement and ideas) were also explored. These factors were linked to the challenge of disclosing information about their offences (facing up), that each group member was undertaking during the weekly group sessions.

The theme of responsibility was explored in relation to adherence to safety procedures, and in relation to group member's roles in belaying. From this the importance of responsibility was identified, with discussions around the observation that at times being responsible is not the most exciting thing to do.

Residential program two (June 1996).

This was a three-day residential program, based at The Outlook, and held at the completion of block one and prior to the commencement of block two. Broad aims of this program were to consolidate learnings from the first block, introduce themes of the second block, and continue to facilitate self-esteem and psychosocial skill development. Specific aims included: 1) acknowledge achievements in the "face up" block and consolidate themes, for example responsibility; 2) introduce the importance of assessing and balancing own needs with the needs of others; 3) develop an awareness of self and others; and 4) develop self esteem.

An all day fantasy bush walk journey was the major medium used. The 1996 journey was a long one-day bush walk in the mountain ranges on the Queensland/New South Wales border. Instruction sheets identified the fantasy story/task for the day, which involved working through a variety of problem solvers and other activities including the 'Spiders Web', 'Blind Polygon' and the 'Great Egg Drop' (Rohnke, 1984, 1989). The instructions for this were provided periodically, using a treasure hunt type format. The first half of the walk incorporated the treasure hunt over steep wooded countryside. Group members had to carry packs containing food, water, first aid and other safety equipment. Additional equipment for the planned activities also had to be carried. After a picnic lunch, the group followed a more arduous walk out of the valley.

The themes of awareness of self and others were explored during the activity including the need to recognise the feelings and experiences of others. The balance of looking after own and others needs was also explored. Opportunities to reflect on these issues included carrying packs, waiting for people at the back of the group and negotiating creek crossings.

Debriefing highlighted and identified incidents when group members demonstrated such an awareness, as well as when group members only considered their own needs, at the expense of others. In subsequent discussions the ease of thinking of yourself first was explored, along with the steps involved in beginning to be more aware of what's going on for others. Links were also made back to their sexual offending including how their ability to block out and ignore the feelings of others, and think only of their own feelings, contributed to their abusive behaviour. Arising from those discussions, the importance of changing this behaviour in preventing further offending was identified.

Facilitators also guided a discussion to allow members to begin to consider the experience of having needs and feelings ignored. This was linked to the experience of

victims of sexual abuse. A 'journey' metaphor was also used to reflect on individual journeys in dealing with sexual abuse, and the impact of sexual abuse on their own lives.

Residential program three (September 1996).

Planning was highlighted in the third residential adventure therapy program. Group members were given the task of planning a two-day canoe trip down the upper reaches of the Brisbane River. To undertake this role, the group members were given information about the trip and responsibility for planning a menu, shopping list, equipment list and packing out, as well as for decisions about distances travelled each day, and where and when to stop for breaks/meals. Group members were given a strict budget and were also responsible for completing the shopping.

Post activity debriefing centred around issues of planning, as an introduction to the following 10 week block which focused on planning for safety in relation to sexual offending (relapse or reoffence prevention). By focussing on the planning by the group, it was possible to identify some of the important factors in planning generally. These included gathering information, considering options, considering consequences of options, asking for help where necessary and thinking ahead. The importance of these factors in planning for future safety in relation to sexual offending was also explored.

Interestingly, one group member failed to take his paddle and the group was faced with having to improvise. The consequences for lack of planning were reinforced for this boy and for the group. Debriefing of this incident highlighted the importance of planning, including checking and rechecking and consideration of alternative plans.

Residential program four (December 1996).

The final adventure therapy program was designed to: 1) consolidate learnings from the final block; 2) recap/summarise the years experiences in the group program; 3) provide opportunities to identify/illustrate learnings/progress; 4) reward the completion of the years program. The program involved a three-day camp including a two-day canoe journey down the Nymboida River in NSW, which involved low-grade white water. Reinforced by their previous experience, group members again planned the food and equipment for the trip. This time they completed this successfully, demonstrating learnings from their last experience.

Throughout the program, facilitators highlighted any observed changes/learnings in individuals' behaviours (including improved responsibility with camp chores, improved communication skills including negotiation between pairs in the canoes and increased awareness of others). Links were also made between negotiating the rapids and planning for future safety in relation to sexual offending. This included the importance of being able to identify risk situations and making decisions about how to manage such situations (including whether they should be avoided, or managed with thought and planning). The specific situations on the program, which provided these opportunities, were the more difficult rapids. Some of these rapids were assessed as too dangerous and participants had to walk the boats around them. Other rapids had to be walked first, with plans made on how to tackle them in canoes.

In processing, related situations for safety, including unsupervised contact with children, were discussed. Group members were able to identify similar situations where they chose to avoid this contact, or when they were able to use other strategies to manage

them safely. Other issues in processing included the importance of asking for help when you need it, for example receiving instructions on suggested routes through the water. At night around the campfire we revisited our experiences during the year. We chose to do this using a storytelling method, recapping experiences, activities and learnings, and encouraging reflections.

General issues and benefits.

Having fun (play) was an important part of each program. This can help to relieve some of the stress and anxiety associated with dealing with their abusive behaviours. Moreover, it highlights other aspects of their lives and personality, other than offending.

All aspects of the program provided excellent opportunities for group members to practice new skills in communication, negotiation, problem solving, dealing with conflict, and general relationship skills. All activities undertaken, as well as meal times and free time, were important opportunities for more learning. The storming between group members also provided opportunities to practice these skills. When facilitator intervention was necessary, learning occurred through the feedback given and modelling of solutions to such situations, or working through them. Problem solving activities provided a useful tool for this, as the solution was dependent on their ability to communicate and negotiate and think about a situation. Other activities like bush walking, which doesn't require a large focus on the specific activity, are mediums, which provide useful opportunities for casual talk.

Given this, free time is a really important part of the residential programs developed. Partly this is about providing opportunities for developing and practising relationship skills, but also to increase feelings of confidence and comfort in each other from both spending time together and just having some fun (for example kicking a ball around). Free time also allows group members to have a rest (physically and mentally) so that they can be prepared for all the planned activities.

In general, some adventure-based activities provide very new experiences for young people. This requires them to stay in touch with their thoughts and feelings to assess the limits of how far to push themselves, and to safely negotiate and complete the activities. This provides a unique opportunity to facilitate the development of awareness of other peoples feelings, which can be witnessed in other peoples, joy, fear or sadness during activities. This in turn provides a unique opportunity for young people to practice looking after other people's feelings, for example by giving encouragement and support.

Evolution of programs

While the experiential learning model (The Outlook, 1995) provided a foundation for planning the adventure based programs, the model is also used in evolving the design of the adventure therapy programs. Staff invest time during and following each program debriefing and analysing strengths and weaknesses, how well objectives were met for both the group and individuals, and implications for individual follow up and subsequent adventure therapy programs. This review process has already impacted on the 1997 program. Changes implemented and planned include:

- A preparatory program consisting of three weekly two hour group sessions prior to the first adventure program. These sessions focussed on negotiating the working agreement and getting to know each other.

- More free time for socialisation.
- Some differences in activities undertaken including the addition of horse riding as an activity.
- Counselling sessions structured into residential programs where appropriate.
- The addition of two mid-block activities in the second and third block to increase program time, and to allow the learning of new skills (including the inclusion of canoe paddling training for a Basic Canoe Skills Certificate).
- Consideration of a residential program for the 'face up' process for 1998.

Considerations for the Introduction of Adventure Therapy

A number of factors need to be considered by agencies working with adolescent sexual offenders that want to incorporate adventure therapy into their program. Agencies must be clear about their objectives. It is important to be clear about what you want to achieve with these clients and what you want to achieve from the adventure therapy programs. One must decide if one is seeking to do recreation or therapy.

Agencies must consider the training of their staff. It is imperative that professional staff receive adequate training both in program design and facilitation, but also in relation to accreditation for hard skills activities, for example, low and high ropes. Staff also need to undertake first aid training. Such training can be both expensive and time consuming, but is essential for staff to plan and facilitate their own adventure-based programs. Alternatively, trained personnel could be contracted for specific programs.

Before adding an adventure therapy program agencies must consider the other resources needed to run a quality program. Whilst such programs vastly increase the intensity and time of the counselling program, increased staff hours also occur. This relates not only to the running of such programs (for example, on weekends) but also for necessary planning and evaluation sessions. Agency budgets would also need to extend to cover food for programs as well as any other necessary costs. It is also important to structure time out for staff on longer programs. At the core of any quality program is careful and full planning. This includes identifying objectives, decisions about activities to be undertaken, themes for formal processing, staffing arrangements, etc.

The final critical area to consider are the safety issues of running an adventure therapy program. It is important for safety issues to be well thought out. Staff must receive full first aid training. There must be a collection of medical information and contact details relating to all group members (this information must be readily available to facilitators, as well as left with an on call or emergency worker. There must be clearly identified non-negotiable rules relating to safety issues and participants must to commit to them. There must also be procedures designed for managing specific safety issues, eg guidelines for dealing with any sexualized behaviours amongst group members.

Conclusion

Adventure therapy provides a unique, creative and therapeutically significant way of working with adolescents who have sexually offended. Case studies confirm that many adolescents benefit therapeutically and personally from these experiences. What is essential to the program offered at SACS however, is the combination of adventure

therapy with other counselling processes. These include group counselling, individual counselling and family counselling as a comprehensive vehicle for change.

Given the adventure therapy components are just one part of the overall counselling program, it is difficult to evaluate the impact and success of individual models that collectively comprise the adventure therapy initiative and group counselling program. Reviews of each of the adventure programs however indicate the programs easily meet the set objectives. Indicators used to reach such a conclusion include assessments made by facilitators from observations of the group members' behaviours and contributions both on the camps and in later group sessions, as well as from feedback from parents and the young people themselves.

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